Frequently asked questions about Bloomington's water

Should I get a water filtration system for my home?

Because Bloomington's water surpasses all federal and state standards, home filtration systems are not necessary. However, if you choose to purchase a filtration system for aesthetic or medical reasons, keep the following in mind:

- Find out if the filter you are considering is capable of removing substances that concern you.
- Look for filters that have been certified by NSF International (an independent testing group) and Underwriters Laboratory (UL).
- Follow the manufacturer's maintenance instructions carefully. When not properly maintained and serviced, filtration systems can harbor disease-causing bacteria that are not otherwise in the City's water supply.

Do I need a home water softening system?

Our lime-softening process removes most of the hardness in Bloomington's water, reducing it from 19 grains per gallon (raw water) to about 5.2 grains per gallon (finished water). The water is also treated to be noncorrosive. This helps prevent unsafe levels of lead and copper from leaching into the water from home plumbing. Home softening systems can further reduce water hardness, usually by adding a small amount of sodium.

Other questions?

Feel free to contact us at any time with your questions about drinking water. Call the Water Treatment Plant at 952-563-4905.

Website keywords: Water FAQs.

Why is the water from my faucet cloudy?

Occasionally we receive calls reporting water that appears cloudy or milky. Usually indicating the presence of either oxygen or calcium, cloudy water is perfectly safe to drink.

Oxygen in water: Sometimes water fresh from the tap appears cloudy. Within a minute or two, the cloudiness rises toward the top of a glass and before long the whole glass is crystal clear. This is caused by excess oxygen escaping from the water.

Changes in water temperature and pressure can cause the oxygen dissolved in it to reach a "supersaturated" state where more oxygen is in the water than it can hold. When the water passes through a faucet, the disturbance is enough to release the excess oxygen out of the water, forming microscopic bubbles. The bubbles are so tiny that it takes them a long time to rise through the water. No harm will come from using oxygenated water and you need not take any corrective action if you experience it.

Calcium in water: The chemistry of water is surprisingly complex and many factors influence how it behaves. We treat Bloomington's water so that it is slightly prone to deposit a trace of calcium sediment as it travels through our distribution system. This helps keep our water from becoming corrosive and reduces the likelihood that it might attack water mains or leach lead or copper from our customers' plumbing and fixtures. *See below.* Usually, this calcium sediment remains at the bottom of the water mains, unnoticed by our water users.

However, the calcium can be stirred up when a large volume of water is drawn through a water main in a short time. Events that can increase water velocity include firefighting, water main breaks, hydrant maintenance and filling water or street-cleaning trucks' tanks at a hydrant. If you happen to turn on your cold water right after such an event, you may draw some of the stirred-up water into your pipes.

When calcium causes cloudiness, it is usually noticed in cold water. Let a glassful of the cloudy water sit for about 30 minutes and the calcium, appearing as a white or grayish substance, may settle to the bottom of the glass. Though it may be visually unappealing, such water is perfectly safe to drink or use for cooking.

To clean calcium sediment from your system, we recommend that you wait an hour or two to allow the water in the main to settle. Then, open a large faucet, such as a bathtub faucet, and let the cold water run for about 20 minutes. This will draw clean water through your system and should remove any remaining calcium from your pipes.

Please call us if you have any concerns or if your water remains cloudy after taking these steps.

What can I do to minimize exposure to lead?

The presence of lead ranks among the most common health concerns people have about drinking water. Recent studies suggest that levels of lead once thought to be safe can pose dangers, especially to unborn babies and children. Fortunately, over years of regular and rigorous monitoring, the City of Bloomington's water has never been found to be a significant source of lead.

In fact, lead pipes, solder, brass faucets and other plumbing in your home pose the greatest threat of adding dangerous levels of lead to your water. A few simple practices can minimize your exposure to lead from your home. First, always use cold water for your cooking and drinking. If your plumbing contains lead, hot water will draw more lead out of it. Second, allow your cold water to run for 30 seconds to two minutes. This flushes out any water that may have been in your pipes long enough to pick up higher concentrations of lead.

For more information, call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791 or visit www.epa.gov/safewater/lead. If you are concerned about your home's lead levels, our laboratory can test your water for a fee.

The average person in the United States uses anywhere from 80 to 100 gallons of water per day. Flushing the toilet accounts for the largest amount of this water.

Water facts © AllAboutWater.org.

Important information

For people with compromised immune systems

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised people, such as people with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, people who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly and infants, can be particularly at risk of infections.

These people should seek advice from their health care providers about drinking water. Environmental Protection Agency and Centers for Disease Control guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791.

Lead in water

If present, infants and children who drink water containing lead in excess could experience delays in their physical or mental development. Children could show slight deficits in attention span and learning abilities. Adults who drink this water over many years could develop kidney problems or high blood pressure.

Lead in drinking water is primarily from the components associated with service lines and home plumbing. The City is responsible for providing high quality drinking water, but cannot control the materials used in plumbing. When your water has been sitting for hours, minimize potential lead exposure by flushing the tap for 30 seconds to two minutes. If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may have your water tested.

Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods and steps to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or at www.epa.gov/safewater/lead.